

Bright Urges Department of Transportation to Reconsider Airplane Peanut Ban

WASHINGTON,

DC — Today, Congressman Bobby Bright outlined his concerns about a proposed Department of Transportation (DOT) policy that would severely restrict the use of peanuts on commercial airplanes in a letter sent to DOT Secretary Ray LaHood. The DOT recently announced it is considering three options in regards to distributing airline peanuts to customers: a complete ban, a requirement that airlines offer a “peanut free” flight if requested in advance by a passenger with a peanut allergy, or a requirement to create “peanut-free buffer zones” on flights for passengers with allergies. Similar guidance was offered by the DOT in 1998 but ultimately abandoned after Congress barred the use of funds to implement suggested changes to airline peanut policy.

From

the letter: “It is my belief that any ban or restriction on peanuts in airplanes is a clear case of overreach on the part of the federal government which has no basis in science, and could hurt American farmers and kill jobs. While I understand that some travelers are anxious about the possibility of severe allergic reactions to airborne peanut particles in airplanes, scientific research shows this concern is unwarranted. This suggests that the DOT’s proposal is a solution in search of a problem.”

“This

is a clear case of the government trying to regulate something that shouldn’t be regulated,”

Bright said. “For years, airlines have provided peanuts to passengers with few problems or complaints. I see no reason for the Department of Transportation to suddenly intervene to solve a non-existent problem and I urge Secretary LaHood to reconsider this policy. It is unnecessary and could have an adverse effect on the peanut industry and the thousands of jobs it supports. I will fight to ensure this policy is never implemented.”

A pdf copy of the letter sent to Secretary LaHood can be found [here](#). You can also read its text below.

Dear
Secretary LaHood:

I am writing you regarding the Department of Transportation's (DOT) recent proposal to restrict the distribution of peanut products on airplanes. I understand that this proposed rule has come in response to concern over the issue of airborne exposure to peanut particles in airplanes. In 1998 the DOT's Aviation Enforcement Office issued a guidance letter to the aviation industry that suggested airlines provide a "peanut-free buffer zone" in the case where a traveler with severe peanut allergies has given notification before a flight. Congress quickly moved to block the Department's actions on offering guidance. Now, the DOT is considering three different alternatives to restrict in-flight peanuts: a complete ban, a requirement that airlines offer a "peanut free" flight if requested in advance by a passenger with a peanut allergy, or a requirement similar to the guidance issued in 1998 for airlines to create "peanut-free buffer zones" on flights for passengers with allergies. I am opposed to all three of these options.

It is my belief that any ban or restriction on peanuts in airplanes is a clear case of overreach on the part of the federal government which has no basis in science, and could hurt American farmers and kill jobs. While I understand that some travelers are anxious about the possibility of severe allergic reactions to airborne peanut particles in airplanes, scientific research shows this concern is unwarranted. According to a 2004 study published in the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, no peanut allergen was detected in the air after the study's subjects consumed both shelled and unshelled peanuts in a contained environment. This suggests that the DOT's proposal is a solution in search of a problem. Furthermore, I feel that a ban or restriction on peanut products in planes would also have the adverse effect of creating a false sense of security by implying to passengers that they are in a peanut-free environment when it is impossible for the government to ensure that no other passengers have brought peanut products on board.

The American peanut industry benefits tremendously from its business with airlines throughout the world, and such a regulatory change would undoubtedly have a negative impact on the industry and the tens of thousands of jobs it supports. I feel very strongly that any proposed change in current policy is not supported by the facts and I urge you to reconsider your proposal to ban or restrict peanut distribution on

airplanes. While other recommendations for carrier practices included in this proposed rule may be appropriate, I urge the DOT to refrain from prescribing new practices in regard to peanut distribution on airplanes.

I appreciate your thoughtful attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Bobby Bright

Member of
Congress